

Building Public Private Partnerships to Address HIV/AIDS



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The Impact of HIV/AIDS in Africa

The spread of HIV/AIDS is outpacing response according to the latest UNAIDS report (*AIDS Epidemic Update*, December 2003). Sub-Saharan Africa, which has the highest HIV prevalence in the world with over 25 million people infected, is facing a major social crisis with disastrous consequences for economic development. The epidemic adversely affects human capital; large numbers of skilled workers, teachers, health workers, civil servants, and other professionals are being lost. HIV increases the rates of absenteeism, reduces productivity, imposes additional costs to train and hire new recruits, and increases spending on healthcare, retirement, and death benefits.

Because HIV/AIDS has such enormous and broad-ranging impacts, companies and business associations represent a powerful sector that could become an effective partner in responding to the epidemic. The private sector has a number of skills or core competencies that are critically needed in national HIV/AIDS responses. Public-private partnerships capitalize on the core competencies of each sector to design and implement effective, comprehensive programming.

Purpose of the Brochure

This brochure describes the experience of Nigeria in developing partnerships between the private and public sectors so that the experience can be replicated in other countries. The brochure discusses:

- ✧ The imperative of private and public partnerships in counteracting HIV/AIDS
- ✧ The best private sector practices addressing HIV/AIDS in Africa
- ✧ The challenges in developing public-private partnerships
- ✧ The experience of Nigeria in developing a public-private partnership and how the challenges were addressed
- ✧ The four essential steps for organizing public-private partnerships on the basis of the above experiences.

Imperative of Public-Private Partnerships

In most countries the National AIDS Commission (NAC) coordinates the implementation of the national HIV/AIDS strategy. The NAC aims to galvanize civil society to appreciate the gravity of the epidemic and to organize its response. The enormity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic requires new strategies. The ultimate success of the national response to HIV/AIDS depends on concerted and collaborative efforts by public institutions, private industry, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) at international, national, and local levels.

The provision of broad-based social services, including health care, is familiar to the long-established large companies in Africa. During the early years of their development, many large companies, especially in the mining sector, provided numerous services that were gradually taken over as the nations' public sector capacities increased. Mining companies, for instance, built roads and other infrastructure, ran schools, staffed and managed hospitals, and operated water, sanitation, and refuse removal. The rationale for taking on these extra tasks was improved efficiency. Until public sector capacities increased, the companies could provide these services (all of which were vital to their operation) more effectively and efficiently.

The above principle applies to other critical areas. One area where HIV/AIDS has taken a devastating toll is public administration and management. Already under stress prior to the emergence of HIV/AIDS, the epidemic's spread has severely impeded the operations of most ministries and government departments. Under these circumstances, the core competencies of the private sector could make major contributions and for many countries, the use of these skills may be the only way forward.

The private sector has highly relevant skills or core competencies to contribute to developing and implementing national HIV/AIDS responses. The following examples show how private sector core competencies could be applied:

- ✂ Economic and market expertise could be used to help governments refocus development policies to achieve the accelerated economic growth needed to reduce poverty and the other inequities that fuel the epidemic.
- ✂ Employee health service delivery systems expertise could be used to provide workplace and community prevention, care and treatment programs and, where these are already in place, to assist public and other private sector organizations to implement or upgrade their programs.
- ✂ Administrative and organizational skills could be employed to improve the management and responsiveness of key ministries and HIV/AIDS programs. Accounting firms, for instance, could assist key line ministries such as health and education to streamline their fiscal and resource management policies and procedures. Technology companies could assist government staff in developing better operational structures through the use of information and communication technologies. Consumer goods companies could use their merchandising, sales and service delivery skills to train the officials who monitor and supervise projects.
- ✂ Marketing and communication skills could be used to enhance behavior change messages, especially in the mass media, and to promote essential prevention and care services.

Private Sector Promising Practices Addressing HIV/AIDS in Africa

Most private companies engaged in HIV/AIDS are in southern Africa where the impact of the disease is most pronounced. Realizing that HIV/AIDS affects productivity and profits, some companies provide workplace prevention, care and treatment programs and also make available elements of the program to family and other community members. Some companies provide care and treatment through their existing health facilities, while others partner with private voluntary agencies and nongovernmental organizations to take advantage of their special competencies. Some of the best practices are outlined below.

- ✂ Debswana is a company with high standards of workplace prevention, treatment and care programming. It provides state-of-the-art treatment to its employees, provides incentives to stay HIV-negative and provides effective prevention services. Debswana also requires all contractors to implement comprehensive HIV/AIDS programs. It conducts regular institutional audits to review program performance, identify gaps, and make improvements.
- ✂ ESKOM, a South African utility company, launched a program to upgrade the skills of medical practitioners, especially in rural areas. This initiative complements ESKOM's own in-house prevention, care and support activities.
- ✂ Harmony Gold Mining in South Africa provides treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) to its workers and to the local community. The objective has been to avert further infections, especially HIV, thereby reducing future health costs to the company.
- ✂ Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) supports HIV/AIDS prevention programs and advocacy efforts in cooperation with other business and local communities. This effort extends the effectiveness of SCB's own in-house prevention, care, and treatment program.
- ✂ Private Investors for Africa, consisting of eight multinationals (Barclays, CFAO, Diageo, Heineken, Lafarge, MTN, Unilever, and Standard Bank Group), formed a working group on HIV/AIDS. Their goal is to better understand how joint action and shared experiences of the private sector and broader community can improve the efficiency in addressing AIDS.
- ✂ Coca-Cola Bottlers and the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation have formed multiple partnerships to provide voluntary counseling and HIV testing and antiretroviral (ARV) therapy to all eligible employees.

- ⌘ The Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, an organization of large multinationals, brings the expertise of international businesses to bear on efforts to overcome the epidemic. Members of this coalition must adopt a set of company principles and practices for dealing with HIV/AIDS including nondiscrimination, prevention and awareness, VCT, and care support and treatment. Another major initiative has been to encourage local business leaders to become advocates for broader public sector engagement.
- ⌘ The Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), representing more than 4000 enterprises in the greater Durban area, has taken the lead in promoting businesses to respond to HIV/AIDS. The organization has worked with UNAIDS, the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, universities, and nongovernmental organizations to encourage small and medium-size enterprises to expand HIV prevention programs. DCCI is also seeking ways for smaller enterprises and nongovernmental organizations to work together to address the epidemic more effectively.
- ⌘ Merck and Company, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Government of Botswana have developed the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnership to scale up the country's national program to provide ARV treatment.

Challenges in Building Public-Private Partnership

The above examples show the increasing involvement of the private sector in national programs. However, with the exception of Botswana they do not represent comprehensive public-private partnerships. Three main challenges in developing such partnerships are to:

Develop Leadership Commitment

Strong leadership commitment is required both in the public and private sectors. Public sector leaders must believe that the private sector's contribution is critical to the success of the national program. Equally important is the identification of solid private sector leadership with a demonstrated track record of working on issues beyond core business interests. Leaders from both sectors must be committed to attracting as many businesses, government entities and nongovernmental organizations (including faith-based and community-based organizations) as possible to participate in the national response.

Create Common Vision and Values

Public-private partnerships must be conceived as win-win arrangements and designed to attain a common vision. They must enable participants from varied organizational cultures and professional backgrounds to work together and benefit mutually. The result is an increased potential for creativity, synergy and mutual learning. A government's decision to seek sustainable partnerships with the business community needs to be driven by the skills and core competencies these private sector partners can contribute, not by the size of the grants they make. Private sector partners must be able to participate meaningfully in planning and implementing the national HIV/AIDS strategy. This is challenging because involving the private sector in governance means sharing responsibility and decision-making.

Develop Mutual Trust

Respecting the partner's values, motivations, and attitudes, especially when they do not match one's own, is fundamental to building an effective partnership. Partnerships are new ventures characterized by risk, potential instability, and the uncharted.¹ By their very nature, they involve giving up the types of control businesses and governments are used to wielding and sharing responsibility. These conditions challenge the relationship. However, frequent interactions and small steps that build understanding and trust have been shown to facilitate successful strategic alliances. As with all partnerships, the groups and individuals involved must be flexible and prepared to reconcile differences collaboratively. Some areas of difference are known from the start. Addressing them before the partnership is forged can help move things more quickly.

¹ Barrett, D, et al. "Cross-Sector Collaboration: Lessons from the International Trachoma Initiative" in *Public-Private Partnerships for Health*, ed. Reich, M. Harvard University Press, Boston, MA, 2002. p. 47.

Nigeria's Public-Private Partnership: A Case Study

In mid-2002, the Nigerian National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA) Chairman, representing the Office of the Nigerian Presidency, and the US Mission in Nigeria led by the Ambassador and the USAID Director adopted a USAID Bureau for Africa initiative to stimulate the creation of a public-private partnership. The objectives of this initiative were to:

- ✂ Establish trust and dialogue between private, public and NGO sectors.
- ✂ Engage the business sector as an equal partner in responding to HIV/AIDS.
- ✂ Promote joint development of policy and programming responses and frame them in a manner that shows how these responses enhance business goals.

By late 2002, a number of major business leaders had come together to form a national business working group for HIV/AIDS; by 2003 this group became formalized as the Nigerian Business Campaign to Combat AIDS (NIBUCCA). The experiences from implementing this activity provide important lessons for the expansion of such collaboration. This section describes the processes and results of Nigeria's attempt to develop a public-private partnership.

Steps in the Process

High-level Commitment to Initiate the Process: Three influential stakeholders, the NACA chairperson, who represented the Office of the President of Nigeria, the US ambassador, and the USAID mission director, spearheaded this initiative. With technical input from a knowledgeable business consultant, supplied by the Bureau for Africa, these three high level stakeholders committed themselves and their organizations to stimulating the development of a private sector partnership with the National Action Council on AIDS (NACA). The high level commitment of these leaders and their relationships with business leaders were essential to launch the initiative.

Working Group Formation: Leveraging his relationships with the US and international business community, the US ambassador facilitated the initial private sector meetings to discuss the impact of HIV/AIDS on business. At these meetings, NACA, USAID, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided an overview of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria and the country's role as one of the five "next wave" countries that, without aggressive intervention, may experience a tripling in the number of infections by 2013. Several business participants shared the experiences of their companies elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. Following these meetings, the business leaders formed a working group led by the ambassador and committed themselves to partnering with NACA. The USAID mission director, US ambassador, and the chairman of NACA continued to support this process. Using private sector technical assistance, USAID has been especially active in building capacity at NACA to support and provide leadership to the business community.

Private Sector Invitation to the NACA Board: One of the first actions taken by the NACA chairperson was to invite working group representatives to serve on the NACA board of advisors. This action meant that for the first time in Nigeria, the business community participated fully in the national HIV/AIDS response: policy development, program planning, and implementation. Representatives from four companies currently serve on the NACA board of advisors.

Direct Presidential Involvement: His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo, recognized as an outstanding international leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS, called a one-day workshop for all business leaders in the country at the Presidential Villa in February 2003 where he announced his plan to form a national business AIDS coalition. He prevailed upon the various segments of the business community—national and international, large and small—to work together to support the national response and to lend their core competencies to the public sector's efforts.

Business Community Meets Partnership Commitments: At a subsequent meeting, the coalition membership then formed sub-committees to guide the organizational development process. These subcommittees developed industry-specific membership development strategies. A special task force on overall organizational development recommended management procedures and the minimum HIV/AIDS services a business must provide to be eligible for group membership. This task force recommended the formation of a legally constituted community service organization based in Lagos, managed by a permanent secretariat paid for by the business community and governed by a board of directors.

Nigerian Business Coalition to Combat AIDS (NIBUCCA): On World AIDS Day in 2003, the new enlarged group co-chaired by President Obasanjo and two prominent leaders from a Nigerian and an American business, was officially launched as the Nigerian Business Coalition to Combat AIDS (NIBUCCA). NACA's effort to involve the private sector in shaping policy, procedure and strategy to implement the national AIDS strategy cemented the partnership. NIBUCCA has made NACA a member and invited USAID to serve as an advisor to the process. Cooperation between USAID and NACA further served to give the private sector confidence that a legitimate platform existed to carry out joint programs dedicated solely to the stated mission. This was necessary to gain private sector commitment to engage in efforts "beyond the workplace."

Results to Date

The activity in Nigeria followed the steps described above to develop a new public-private partnership—one that is still evolving. For the first time, the business community in Nigeria and the public sector have joined together to respond to AIDS and to allow the private sector to apply its core competencies to the national AIDS response. Results to date of this new partnership include:

- ✂ Two mechanisms now exist for continued cooperation and collaboration. NACA has appointed four business executives to its board of advisors. Similarly, NIBUCCA has established a board of directors on which the NACA chairperson serves.
- ✂ NACA has hired a business liaison manager to ensure continued cooperation and synergy between NACA and the private sector with support from USAID.
- ✂ NIBUCCA has established a permanent secretariat with staff paid for by the business community and a board of directors.
- ✂ Sector-specific subcommittees have been established among the business community to increase business participation in addressing HIV/AIDS in the workplace and in the surrounding communities.
- ✂ NIBUCCA has drafted a survey to establish the numbers and types of services already being provided by its members. This survey will also be used to identify best practices that can be shared with the business community and other national partners via a proposed website.
- ✂ NIBUCCA leadership has set a goal to achieve 100 percent business participation in responding to HIV/AIDS. NIBUCCA will focus on identifying methods to engage small businesses to develop workplace programs and community outreach.
- ✂ Twenty-one of the twenty-three founding NIBUCCA members have established workplace programs and the remaining two members are committed to doing so.
- ✂ NIBUCCA members are using their core competencies to support NACA's national HIV/AIDS strategy. For example, some companies are using billboards, retail outlets and trucks to support NACA's prevention and awareness program. Awareness messages are being printed on bags of cement, for instance. One pharmaceutical company has proposed making antiretroviral drugs available to the private sector at cost.
- ✂ NIBUCCA has agreed to select three states with high prevalence to develop programs that will demonstrate best practices in workplace and community programs. These best practice models will be made available to the State Action Council on AIDS (SACA) for adoption.

Starting a Public-Private Partnership

The Nigeria experience indicates that four steps are essential to develop a successful public-private partnership.

Step 1: Involve influential leaders and give them information on the value of public-private partnerships to address HIV/AIDS.

In Nigeria, the commitment and participation of the Nigerian president, the US ambassador, and the USAID mission director were critical elements in the success of this initiative. These individuals lent credibility to the project and served as a bridge while private sector and government entities built trust and learned how to communicate with each other.

Step 2: Develop processes, procedures and operating structures to guide the development of the public-private partnership and ensure that business leaders remain committed.

In Nigeria, well-conceived processes and procedures have been essential to keep momentum going, in addition to strong leadership. A management structure must exist that is responsible for implementing the vision of the board and group membership.

Step 3: Secure resources to launch the initiative, preferably from the organizers. Going outside to raise funds could delay the organization and launch of the initiative.

In Nigeria, the US ambassador provided the resources for the initial meetings. However, any leader who was willing to champion the partnership and ensure that it got started and kept on track could have provided these resources.

Step 4: Always remember that the process is as important as the results. The private sector is action-oriented but accustomed to moving incrementally to achieve its goals. At the same time, once buy-in is achieved, industry will move quickly to ensure continued momentum.

In Nigeria, the “next steps” identified at the working group’s meetings were converted into action items that were assigned and completed before subsequent meetings. Each action item became a project—a process designed to minimize risk of failure or noncompletion of tasks. Reports on the completion of these action items then became an important part of the next meeting’s agenda.

Resources on Public-Private Partnerships

Plumley, B, Bery P, Dadd C. *Beyond the Workplace: Business Participation in the Multi-Sectoral Response to HIV/AIDS* Discussion Paper. Global Business Coalition on AIDS. 2002

Reich, M (ed). *Public-Private Partnerships for Public Health*. Harvard University Press. 2002.

National AIDS Commission Guidelines for Responding to HIV/AIDS: Guidelines for the Private Sector. World Bank. Draft 2003.

Global Business Coalition on AIDS: www.gbcaids.com



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